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## What Everybody Wants

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO HAVE A MAGIC PHRASE THAT WOULD STOP arguments, eliminate ill feeling, create good will, and make the other person listen attentively?

Yes? All right. Here it is: "I don't blame you one iota for feeling as you do. If I were you I would undoubtedly feel just as you do."

An answer like that will soften the most cantankerous old cuss alive. And you can say that and be 100 percent sincere, because if you were the other person you, of course, would feel just as he does. Take Al Capone, for example. Suppose you had inherited the same body and temperament and mind that Al Capone had. Suppose you had had his environment and experiences. You would then be precisely what he was—and where he was. For it is those things—and only those things—that made him what he was. The only reason, for example, that you are not a rattlesnake is that your mother and father weren't rattlesnakes.

You deserve very little credit for being what you are—and remember, the people who come to you irritated, bigoted, unreasoning, deserve very little discredit for being what they are. Feel

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sorry for the poor devils. Pity them. Sympathize with them. Say to yourself: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Three-fourths of the people you will ever meet are hungry and thirsting for sympathy. Give it to them, and they will love you.

I once gave a broadcast about the author of *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott. Naturally, I knew she had lived and written her immortal books in Concord, Massachusetts. But, without thinking what I was saying, I spoke of visiting her old home in Concord, New Hampshire. If I had said New Hampshire only once, it might have been forgiven. But, alas and alack! I said it twice. I was deluged with letters and telegrams, stinging messages that swirled around my defenseless head like a swarm of hornets. Many were indignant. A few insulting. One Colonial Dame, who had been reared in Concord, Massachusetts, and who was then living in Philadelphia, vented her scorching wrath upon me. She couldn't have been much more bitter if I had accused Miss Alcott of being a cannibal from New Guinea. As I read the letter, I said to myself, "Thank God, I am not married to that woman." I felt like writing and telling her that although I had made a mistake in geography, she had made a far greater mistake in common courtesy. That was to be just my opening sentence. Then I was going to roll up my sleeves and tell her what I really thought. But I didn't. I controlled myself. I realized that any hotheaded fool could do that—and that most fools would do just that.

I wanted to be above fools. So I resolved to try to turn her hostility into friendliness. It would be a challenge, a sort of game I could play. I said to myself, "After all, if I were she, I would probably feel just as she does." So, I determined to sympathize with her viewpoint. The next time I was in Philadelphia, I called her on the telephone. The conversation went something like this:

- ME: Mrs. So-and-So, you wrote me a letter a few weeks ago, and I want to thank you for it.
- SHE: (in incisive, cultured, well-bred tones): To whom have I the honor of speaking?

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- ME: I am a stranger to you. My name is Dale Carnegie. You listened to a broadcast I gave about Louisa May Alcott a few Sundays ago, and I made the unforgivable blunder of saying that she had lived in Concord, New Hampshire. It was a stupid blunder, and I want to apologize for it. It was so nice of you to take the time to write me.
- SHE: I am sorry, Mr. Carnegie, that I wrote as I did. I lost my temper. I must apologize.
- ME: No! No! You are not the one to apologize; I am. Any school child would have known better than to have said what I said. I apologized over the air the following Sunday, and I want to apologize to you personally now.
- SHE: I was born in Concord, Massachusetts. My family has been prominent in Massachusetts affairs for two centuries, and I am very proud of my native state. I was really quite distressed to hear you say that Miss Alcott had lived in New Hampshire. But I am really ashamed of that letter.
- ME: I assure you that you were not one-tenth as distressed as I am. My error didn't hurt Massachusetts, but it did hurt me. It is so seldom that people of your standing and culture take the time to write people who speak on the radio, and I do hope you will write me again if you detect an error in my talks.
- SHE: You know, I really like very much the way you have accepted my criticism. You must be a very nice person. I should like to know you better.

So, because I had apologized and sympathized with her point of view, she began apologizing and sympathizing with my point of view. I had the satisfaction of controlling my temper, the satisfaction of returning kindness for an insult. I got infinitely more real fun out of making her like me than I could ever have gotten out of telling her to go and take a jump in the Schuylkill River.

Every man who occupies the White House is faced almost daily with thorny problems in human relations. President Taft was no exception, and he learned from experience the enormous chemical value of sympathy in neutralizing the acid of hard feelings. In his book *Ethics in Service*, Taft gives rather an amusing illustration of how he softened the ire of a disappointed and ambitious mother.

"A lady in Washington," wrote Taft, "whose husband had some political influence, came and labored with me for six weeks or more to appoint her son to a position. She secured the aid of Senators and Congressmen in formidable number and came with them to see that they spoke with emphasis. The place was one requiring technical qualification, and following the recommendation of the head of the Bureau, I appointed somebody else. I then received a letter from the mother, saying that I was most ungrateful, since I declined to make her a happy woman as I could have done by a turn of my hand. She complained further that she had labored with her state delegation and got all the votes for an administration bill in which I was especially interested and this was the way I had rewarded her.

"When you get a letter like that, the first thing you do is to think how you can be severe with a person who has committed an impropriety, or even been a little impertinent. Then you may compose an answer. Then if you are wise, you will put the letter in a drawer and lock the drawer. Take it out in the course of two days—such communications will always bear two days' delay in answering—and when you take it out after that interval, you will not send it. That is just the course I took. After that, I sat down and wrote her just as polite a letter as I could, telling her I realized a mother's disappointment under such circumstances, but that really the appointment was not left to my mere personal preference, that I had to select a man with technical qualifications, and had, therefore, to follow the recommendations of the head of the Bureau. I expressed the hope that her son would go on to accomplish what she had hoped for him in the position which he then had. That mollified her and she wrote me a note saying she was sorry she had written as she had.

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"But the appointment I sent in was not confirmed at once, and after an interval I received a letter which purported to come from her husband, though it was in the same handwriting as all the others. I was therein advised that, due to the nervous prostration that had followed her disappointment in this case, she had to take to her bed and had developed a most serious case of cancer of the stomach. Would I not restore her to health by withdrawing the first name and replacing it by her son's? I had to write another letter, this one to the husband, to say that I hoped the diagnosis would prove to be inaccurate, that I sympathized with him in the sorrow he must have in the serious illness of his wife, but that it was impossible to withdraw the name sent in. The man whom I appointed was confirmed, and within two days after I received that letter, we gave a musicale at the White House. The first two people to greet Mrs. Taft and me were this husband and wife, though the wife had so recently been *in articulo mortis*."

Jay Mangum represented an elevator-escalator maintenance company in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which had the maintenance contract for the escalators in one of Tulsa's leading hotels. The hotel manager did not want to shut down the escalator for more than two hours at a time because he did not want to inconvenience the hotel's guests. The repair that had to be made would take at least eight hours, and his company did not always have a specially qualified mechanic available at the convenience of the hotel.

When Mr. Mangum was able to schedule a top-flight mechanic for this job, he telephoned the hotel manager and instead of arguing with him to give him the necessary time, he said:

"Rick, I know your hotel is quite busy and you would like to keep the escalator shutdown time to a minimum. I understand your concern about this, and we want to do everything possible to accommodate you. However, our diagnosis of the situation shows that if we do not do a complete job now, your escalator may suffer more serious damage and that would cause a much longer shutdown. I know you would not want to inconvenience your guests for several days."

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The manager had to agree that an eight-hour shutdown was more desirable than several days'. By sympathizing with the manager's desire to keep his patrons happy, Mr. Mangum was able to win the hotel manager to his way of thinking easily and without rancor.

Joyce Norris, a piano teacher in St. Louis, Missouri, told of how she had handled a problem piano teachers often have with teenage girls. Babette had exceptionally long fingernails. This is a serious handicap to anyone who wants to develop proper piano-playing habits.

Mrs. Norris reported: "I knew her long fingernails would be a barrier for her in her desire to play well. During our discussions prior to her starting her lessons with me, I did not mention anything to her about her nails. I didn't want to discourage her from taking lessons, and I also knew she would not want to lose that which she took so much pride in and such great care to make attractive.

"After her first lesson, when I felt the time was right, I said: 'Babette, you have attractive hands and beautiful fingernails. If you want to play the piano as well as you are capable of and as well as you would like to, you would be surprised how much quicker and easier it would be for you, if you would trim your nails shorter. Just think about it, okay?' She made a face which was definitely negative. I also talked to her mother about this situation, again mentioning how lovely her nails were. Another negative reaction. It was obvious that Babette's beautifully manicured nails were important to her.

"The following week Babette returned for her second lesson. Much to my surprise, the fingernails had been trimmed. I complimented her and praised her for making such a sacrifice. I also thanked her mother for influencing Babette to cut her nails. Her reply was 'Oh, I had nothing to do with it. Babette decided to do it on her own, and this is the first time she has ever trimmed her nails for anyone.'"

Did Mrs. Norris threaten Babette? Did she say she would refuse to teach a student with long fingernails? No, she did not.

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She let Babette know that her fingernails were a thing of beauty and it would be a sacrifice to cut them. She implied, "I sympathize with you—I know it won't be easy, but it will pay off in your better musical development."

Sol Hurok was probably America's number one impresario. For almost half a century he handled artists—such world-famous artists as Chaliapin, Isadora Duncan, and Pavlova. Mr. Hurok told me that one of the first lessons he had learned in dealing with his temperamental stars was the necessity for sympathy, sympathy and more sympathy with their idiosyncrasies.

For three years, he was impresario for Feodor Chaliapin—one of the greatest bassos who ever thrilled the ritzy boxholders at the Metropolitan. Yet Chaliapin was a constant problem. He carried on like a spoiled child. To put it in Mr. Hurok's own inimitable phrase: "He was a hell of a fellow in every way."

For example, Chaliapin would call up Mr. Hurok about noon of the day he was going to sing and say, "Sol, I feel terrible. My throat is like raw hamburger. It is impossible for me to sing to-night." Did Mr. Hurok argue with him? Oh, no. He knew that an entrepreneur couldn't handle artists that way. So he would rush over to Chaliapin's hotel, dripping with sympathy. "What a pity," he would mourn. "What a pity! My poor fellow. Of course, you cannot sing. I will cancel the engagement at once. It will only cost you a couple of thousand dollars, but that is nothing in comparison to your reputation."

Then Chaliapin would sigh and say, "Perhaps you had better come over later in the day. Come at five and see how I feel then."

At five o'clock, Mr. Hurok would again rush to his hotel, dripping with sympathy. Again he would insist on canceling the engagement and again Chaliapin would sigh and say, "Well, maybe you had better come to see me later. I may be better then."

At seven-thirty the great basso would consent to sing, only with the understanding that Mr. Hurok would walk out on the stage of the Metropolitan and announce that Chaliapin had a very bad cold and was not in good voice. Mr. Hurok would lie and say he

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would do it, for he knew that was the only way to get the basso out on the stage.

Dr. Arthur I. Gates said in his splendid book *Educational Psychology*: "Sympathy the human species universally craves. The child eagerly displays his injury; or even inflicts a cut or bruise in order to reap abundant sympathy. For the same purpose adults . . . show their bruises, relate their accidents, illness, especially details of surgical operations. 'Self-pity' for misfortunes real or imaginary is, in some measure, practically a universal practice."

So, if you want to win people to your way of thinking, put in practice . . .

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### PRINCIPLE 9

Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires.

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